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SUBJECT: GUATEMALAN CONCERNS ABOUT "MINUTEMAN PROJECT"

1. The Ambassador received March 30 a letter from Guatemalan FM Jorge Briz expressing concern about the "Minuteman Project" and other private U.S. efforts to patrol the border and intercept illegal migrants. Text of the letter, dated March 27, follows in para 2. Embassy requests the Department's guidance in formulating a response.

2. Embassy's informal translation of FM Briz's letter to the Ambassador:

Mr. Ambassador:

With great concern we have learned of the "Minuteman project" led by Mr. James W. Gilchrist, Vietnam veteran, to recruit volunteers for a force which supposedly will track and detect undocumented aliens to block their entry into the United States.

In the context of the prevailing situation, Mr. Gilchrist's proposal follows other illegal organizations such as "American patrol" and "Ranch Rescue," which combine alarming characteristics, including racism, "profiling," and xenophobia -- an explosive combination that in many cases results in acts of violence.

As you know, Guatemala is making growing efforts to contain irregular migration to the north, promoting development projects in areas of greatest outward migration and coordinating with neighboring countries, particularly with Mexico, to manage this phenomenon.

It should be noted that this Foreign Ministry welcomed President Bush's statements on the issue of migration and his desire to resolve the irregular status of foreigners living in the United States and facilitate dignified conditions for them.

In that sense we understand that organizations such as the above-mentioned respond to uncontrolled extremist initiatives that operate without institutional control and intend to assume functions which belong to U.S. authorities.

However, Guatemala cannot stop from expressing its concern over this type of action, soliciting a response from your government in order to guarantee the principles which gave birth to your nation, fundamentally grounded in respect for human rights.

(complimentary closing)

Jorge Briz

3. Comment & Action Request: Guatemalan media have noted with alarm recent announcements of incipient U.S. citizen efforts to patrol the U.S.-Mexico border and assist U.S. authorities with the interdiction of aliens illegally entering the U.S. Embassy would appreciate Department's guidance for responding to FM Briz, particularly on his allegation that "American Patrol" and "Ranch Rescue" are "illegal" organizations and whether we have any reason to be concerned about what the "Minuteman Project" proposes to do.
HAMILTON